



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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APR 21 2003

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0303

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to provide the Department's implementation plan for the "National Call to Service" program, as called for in Section 531 of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003. This plan outlines how the Department will implement this new short-term enlistment option as an integral part of the overall enlisted recruiting program.

The Department appreciates this new enlistment option and hopes that it will encourage young Americans who may not have served under the current array of enlistment options to both serve their country and experience military service. Each of the Services plans to commence recruitment under this program in Fiscal Year 2004, with about 2,000 to 3,000 total participants across the Department in the first year.

Similar letters have been sent to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, and the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Defense subcommittees of the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations.

Sincerely,


Charles S. Abell

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Ike Skelton
Ranking Member



National Call to Service – Department of Defense Implementation

Statutory Authority. The Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, amends Chapter 31 of title 10, United States Code, providing the Department of Defense with a new short-term enlistment option designed to promote and facilitate military enlistment in support of national service. This amendment authorizes a menu of incentives for a 15-month enlistment term to begin upon completion of initial entry training and followed with additional service on active duty, in the Reserve Components, or in a national service program.

The following establishes Department of Defense policy for implementing this new short-term enlistment option, henceforth the National Call to Service Program (NCS). Services will fully integrate this program in their enlisted recruiting programs.

Implementation Date. Enlistments under this program will commence October 1, 2003.

Service Obligation. Enlistments under the NCS program will incur an eight-year mandatory service obligation (MSO). This MSO typically will consist of:

- 15 months of active duty after completion of initial entry training (to include skill training), followed by
- 24 months of duty in the Selected Reserve (SELRES), followed by
- Remainder of MSO in:
 - SELRES
 - Individual Ready Reserve
 - Other national service programs (AmeriCorps, Peace Corps) as designated by the Secretary of Defense
 - Any combination of the above

Qualifications. NCS participation will be limited to applicants who meet all of the following criteria:

- Non-prior service
- High School Diploma Graduate (Tier 1)
- ASVAB Categories I-III A

Usage/Assignment. Military Department Secretaries will determine the specific skills authorized for NCS participants and provide a list of skills to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness each year. Skills should be selected to facilitate national service objectives and Selected Reserve requirements.

NCS participants will be worldwide deployable within current Service rules. Military Department Secretaries may waive the provisions of DoDD 1315.7, "Military Personnel Assignments," to permit such assignments.

While serving on active duty, NCS enlistees will be managed the same as other Servicemembers with regard to promotions, Uniform Code of Military Justice, stop-loss, etc.

NCS enlistees may be accessed at advanced pay grades in accordance with current Service policy.

Incentives. NCS participants will be given the opportunity to select one of the following incentives upon enlistment.

- Bonus of \$5,000 – payable upon completion of active duty obligation.
- Repayment of qualifying student loans, as defined in section 510(l)(2) of title 10, United States Code, (principal and interest) up to \$18,000 – payable upon completion of active duty obligation. Military Department Secretaries may request the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness approve a lower limit for such loan repayment. If a lower limit is specified, that limit will be applicable to all enlistees in that Service in a given fiscal year. In no case, will the limit be lower than \$10,000.
- Education allowance for up to 12 months payable at the monthly rate for basic educational assistance allowances under section 3015(a)(1) of title 38, United States Code. Servicemember may begin to use the benefit at any time after completion of active duty obligation. Benefit will cease if SELRES obligation is not completed.
- Education allowance for up to 36 months payable at the one-half of the monthly rate for basic educational assistance allowances under section 3015(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code. Servicemember may begin to use the benefit at any time after completion of active duty obligation. Benefit will cease if SELRES obligation is not completed.

NCS participants who fail to complete the contracted MSO shall refund to the United States the amount that bears the same ratio to the amount of the incentive as the uncompleted part of such service bears to the total period of such service. Military Department Secretaries may waive such payment, in whole or in part, upon determination that such recovery would be against equity and good conscience or would be contrary to the best interests of the United States.

Reenlistment/extension on Active Duty. NCS participants are eligible to reenlist/extend on active duty prior to completion of their active duty commitment provided they meet current Service criteria. Such reenlistment/extension must be for at least two years and will fulfill the SELRES commitment portion of the MSO. NCS participants will not be eligible for a Selective Reenlistment Bonus for this reenlistment/extension.

Disposition of NCS incentives upon reenlistment/extension on extended active duty:

- If \$5,000 bonus was selected – entire bonus paid upon reenlistment. Servicemember will be allowed to enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill by completing a DD Form 2366 and having their pay reduced \$100 for the next 12 months.
- If loan repayment was selected, loan will be repaid at time of reenlistment. Servicemember will be allowed to enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill by completing a DD Form 2366 and having their pay reduced \$100 for the next 12 months.

- If either of the education allowances was selected, NCS participants will retain that incentive and be allowed to enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill by completing a DD Form 2366 and having their pay reduced \$100 for the next 12 months. However, the statute requires that the total amount of the allowance paid as an NCS educational incentive must be deducted from their Montgomery GI Bill benefits.¹

Selected Reserve Service. Military Department Secretaries will establish policies to facilitate SELRES service for NCS participants, with a goal of establishing such service (unit, IMA position, etc.) prior to release from active duty. However, the maximum distance an NCS participant may be required to travel involuntarily between residence and IDT site is governed by DoDI 1215.18. For any NCS participant who does not voluntarily accept assignment to a SELRES unit and who may not be involuntarily assigned to a SELRES unit because of these restrictions, Military Department Secretaries should make maximum attempts to assign them to an IMA billet. Exceptions to the requirement that SELRES service be completed may be granted by the Military Department Secretary only in those cases where neither unit nor IMA positions are available.

NCS participants who contract for six years in the SELRES will be eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve program.

Follow-on Service. NCS participants who complete the two-year SELRES commitment will have the option of continuing in a SELRES status, or:

- Will be transferred to the IRR of their Service for the remainder of their MSO.
- May serve all or a portion of this time in a National Service Program. Current eligible National Service Programs are:
 - Peace Corps
 - AmeriCorps

NCS participants who chose to serve all or a portion of their follow-on service in one of the National Service Programs will be transferred to the Standby Reserve of their Service for that period. Transfer to the Standby Reserve will be accomplished upon the NCS participant furnishing an acceptance document from the National Service Program.

Resource Implications. The Military Services do not require additional funding to implement the NCS program. The NCS program will be financed from within funding budgeted for recruiting.

¹ This offset has the anomalous effect of eliminating the NCS educational allowance as an incentive for the member who chooses to reenlist and to participate in the Montgomery GI Bill.